

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 SY-07

M-03 A-01 OPR-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 PPT-02 INRE-00 EB-11

RSR-01 AID-20 /128 W

----- 042027

P R 131600 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1072

INFO AMCONSUL ADANA

AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2896

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, LE, PINS

SUBJECT: SECURITY THREAT TO AMERICAN TOURISTS

REF: BEIRUT 2618

SUMMARY: GOL OFFICIAL (MIN TRANSPORT) CALLED EMBASSY CONCERNED THAT " REGINA" WILL NOT CALL BEIRUT THIS WEEK. HE ASKED OUR ASSISTANCE IN CAUSING SPONSORING TRAVEL AGENCY TO RECONSIDER AND IS WIRING AGENCY TO GIVE GOL' S ASSURANCES OF INCREASED SECURITY AT BEIRUT PORT. END SUMMARY.

1. RAYMOND FARHAT, GOL DIRECTOR OF MARITIME SERVICES, MIN PUBLIC WORKS AND TRANSPORT, AND RECENTLY DESIGNATE CHIEF OF GOL' S COMMISSION INVESTIGATING CAUSE OF EXPLOSION ON " SOUNION", PHONED EMBOFF MARCH 13 THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED WORD THAT " REGINA" HAD CANCELLED SCHEDULED CALL BEIRUT, THURSDAY, MARCH 15. BASING HIS REQUEST ON WHAT WAS ERRONEOUS NEWSPAPER REPORT LAST WEEK, HE HOPED EMBASSY WOULD, " AS IT HAD DONE BEFORE" ENCOURAGE
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SHIP TO RECONSIDER DECISION AND TO MAKE STOP AS SCHEDULED.

2. EMBOFF ASSURED FARHAT THAT WE HAD NEITHER ENCOURAGED NOR DISCOURAGED TRAVEL AGENCY RESPONSIBEL FOR PASSENGERS ON " REGINA" (WHOLESale TOURS INTERNATIONAL) TO CANCEL CALL MARCH 8, BUT HAD SUGGESTED DEPT BRIEF AGENCY ON POST-" SOUNION" EXPLOSION DEVELOPMENTS (GOL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS AND (NON) RESULTS OF INVESTIGATION) AND REQUEST AGENCY EVALUATE CAREFULLY ADVISABILITY OF BEIRUT CALL MARCH 8. EMBOFF EMPHASIZED THAT DECISION WAS UP TO AGENCY. HE ADDED THAT VP LAMBERT OF " WHOLESale TOURS", WHO VISITED LEBANON, STATED TO US HE AWARE GOL' S DESIRE ASSURE SAFETY OF PASSENGERS BUT HIS ORGANIZATION, JUST AS USG AND THIS EMBASSY, FOCUSED PRIMARY CONCERN ON SECURITY OF AMERICAN PASSENGERS. EMBOFF SPECULATED THAT PREVIOUS DECISION CANCEL BEIRUT CALL, AND MARCH 15 VISIT ALSO, MADE SINCE CAUSE " SOUNION" EXPLOSION STILL NOT KNOWN AND, WITH HUMAN LIVES AT STATE, BETTER TO ERR ON CONSERVATIVE SIDE IN SUCH A DECISION.

3. FARHAT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD AGENCY' S CAUTION BUT WISHED IT AND USG ASSURED THAT GOL HAS TAKEN EXTRAORDINARY PRE-CAUTIONS AT PORT AND " REGINA" AND OTHER SUCH SHIPS WILL RECEIVE OPTIMUM PROTECTION. HE SAID HE WAS CABLING AGENCY TO THIS EFFECT " ON BEHALF GOL". RE INVESTIGATION: HE STATED SHIP SINKING EVER DEEPER INTO MUD CAUSING COMPLI-CATION IN INVESTIGATION. TO DATE THERE WAS NO REPEAT NO EVIDENCE OF SABOTAGE, BUT NO EVIDENCE EITHER TO CONTRARY. FARHAT STATED THESE TROUBLED TIMES (EXTENDED HIS PERSONAL HEART-FELT GRIEF, AND THAT OF ALL LEBANESE, FOR MURDERS IN KHARTOUM) AND EMBASSY COULD EXPECT THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO CAUSE " SOUNION" EXPLOSION. EMBOFF REPLIED WE COUNTED ON FULL AND AS SPEEDY AS POSSIBLE REPORT OF FACTS AS DETERMINED BY HIS COMMISSION.

4. COMMENT: WE BELIEVE AGENCY' S DECISION FOR " REGINA" NOT TO CALL BEIRUT THIS WEEK IS WISE ONE AND PERHAPS WILL ASSIST IN UNDERSCORING OUR DESIRE FOR COMPLETE AND ACCURATE REPORT ON CAUSE " SOUNION' S" SINKING, AND CAUSE LEBANESE TO MAINTAIN MORE STRINGENT SECURITY.
BUFFUM

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